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Message Text

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22
ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, RP
SUBJECT: OCTOBER 16 NATIONAL REFERENDUM

REF: MANILA 13366

BEGIN SUMMARY: COMELEC COMMISSIONER MADARANG CONFIRMED TO EMBOFF THREE QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED IN OCTOBER 16 REFERENDUM. HE SAID AT LEAST ONE ADDITIONAL QUESTION MAY BE ADDED BY PRESIDENT MARCOS LATER. MADARANG ALSO OUTLINED THE GUIDE-LINES FOR HOLDING REFERENDUM, WHICH WILL BE CONDUCTED BY THE BARANGAYS UNDER COMELEC SUPERVISION. END SUMMARY.

1. COMELEC COMMISSIONER CASIMIRO MADARANG, A MARCOS LOYALIST AND FORMER CONCON DELEGATE, DISCUSSED THE UPCOMING NATIONAL REFERENDUM WITH EMBOFF SEPTEMBER 8. MADARANG CONFIRMED THAT, AS REPORTED REFTEL, AT LEAST THREE QUES-TIONS WILL BE DECIDED BY OCTOBER 16 REFERENDUM: (1) CONTINUATION OF MARTIAL LAW, (2) CONVENING OF INTERIM NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (INA) AND, (3) CALLING OF NEW CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION TO AMEND CONSTITUTION AND REPLACE INA. MADARANG SAID A FOURTH QUESTION, THE LENGTH OF TIME MARTIAL LAW SHOULD REMAIN IN EFFECT, MAY ALSO BE ASKED, BUT POINTED OUT THAT PRESIDENT MARCOS HIMSELF WILL MAKE FINAL DECISION ON INCLUSION OF THIS
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OR OTHER QUESTIONS. NOTE: THIS IS CONSISTENT WITH

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SEPT 2 PRESIDENTIAL DECREE (P.D. 991) ON REFERENDUM,
WHICH STATES, "THE BARANGAYS SHALL RESOLVE THE ISSUES
OF MARTIAL LAW, THE INTERIM ASSEMBLY, ITS REPLACEMENT,
THE POWERS OF SUCH REPLACEMENT, THE PERIOD OF ITS EXIS-
TENCE, THE LENGTH OF THE PERIOD FOR THE EXERCISE OF THE
PRESIDENT OF HIS PRESENT POWERS AND SUCH OTHER ISSUES
THAT MAY BE CERTIFIED BY THE PRESIDENT IN ANOTHER DECREE."
COPY OF DECREE, WHICH WAS RELEASED BY MALACANANG SEPT 8,
IS BEING POUCHED TO EA/PHL.

2. MADARANG DESCRIBED THE REFERENDUM AS THE FIRST IN A
THREE-STEP PROCESS OF POLITICAL "NORMALIZATION." THE
SECOND STEP, HE SAID, WILL BE ELECTION IN JANUARY 1977
OF DELEGATES TO A NEW CONCON. THE LAST STEP WILL BE
AMENDMENT OF CONSTITUTION BY CONCON TO REPLACE INA WITH
SOME SORT OF NEW LEGISLATIVE BODY. MADARANG SAID
PRESIDENT MARCOS HAS LONG BEEN CONTEMPLATING NORMALI-
ZATION AND "IS DETERMINED TO SEE IT THROUGH," EVEN
THOUGH THE ENTIRE PROCESS MAY BE LENGTHY. MARCOS, HE
SAID, "READS PLENTY OF BOOKS," AND IS FULLY AWARE OF
THE DANGERS OF AN UNCERTAIN POLITICAL STRUCTURE WHICH
DOES NOT PROVIDE FOR SUCCESSION.

3. ACCORDING TO MADARANG, THE DEPARTMENT OF LOCAL
GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (DLGCD) HAD HOPED
TO HAVE COMPLETE RESPONSIBILITY FOR HOLDING THE REFERENDUM,
BUT COMELEC MANAGED TO CONVINCE THE PRESIDENT THAT TO
EXCLUDE IT FROM REFERENDUM SUPERVISION WOULD CAST GRAVE
DOUBTS ON THE LEGITIMACY OF THE ENTIRE NORMALIZATION
PROCESS. AS A RESULT, A COMPROMISE WAS REACHED IN WHICH
THE VOTE WILL BE CONDUCTED BY DLGCD BUT SUPERVISED BY
COMELEC. BARANGAY REFERENDUM COMMITTEES WILL BE SET UP
IN EACH BARANGAY "UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF DLGCD" TO CONDUCT
THE POLLING AND COUNT THE VOTES. COMELEC WILL OVERSEE
THE BARANGAY REFERENDUM COMMITTEES AND WILL TABULATE THE
TALLY SHEETS SUBMITTED BY THE BARANGAYS. ALL BARANGAY
MEMBERS OVER 15 YEARS OF AGE, INCLUDING ILLITERATES, WILL
BE REQUIRED TO VOTE.

4. WHEN ASKED COMELEC'S VIEW ON HOLDING THE REFERENDUM,
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MADARANG REPLIED COMELEC HAD BEEN ADVISING THE PRESIDENT
AGAINST A REFERENDUM UP UNTIL THREE WEEKS AGO, WHEN IT
BECAME CLEAR MARCOS HAD MADE UP HIS MIND IN FAVOR.
MADARANG SPECULATED THAT THE REFERENDUM WAS A CONVENIENT
WAY FOR MARCOS TO SOUND OUT PUBLIC OPINION, SINCE THE
RESULTS ARE NOT BINDING. HE ADDED THAT DLGCD PUSHED
FOR THE REFERENDUM AS A MEANS OF INCREASING THE STATURE
AND PARTICIPATION OF THE BARANGAYS.

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5. COMMENT: THE RESULT OF THE REFERENDUM SEEM A FOREGONE CONCLUSION. THE ASSUMPTION IS THAT THE POPULACE WILL VOTE OVERWHELMINGLY TO CONTINUE MARTIAL LAW, NOT TO CONVENE THE INA, BUT TO CALL A NEW CONCON TO AMEND THE CONSTITUTION AND REPLACE INA. WITH NO SUSPENSE AS TO THE REFERENDUM'S OUTCOME, THE PRESS HAS BEEN BILLING THE VOTE AS A TEST OF THE ELECTORATE'S POLITICAL MATURITY; I.E., OF WHETHER OR NOT A NATIONAL VOTE CAN BE CARRIED OUT WITHOUT A RETURN TO THE CORRUPT POLITICAL WAYS OF THE OLD SOCIETY. MORE ACCURATELY, THE REFERENDUM WILL TEST WHETHER THE BARANGAYS HAVE BECOME SUFFICIENTLY INSTITUTIONALIZED TO OBTAIN THE DESIRED ELECTORAL RESULTS IN A NATIONAWIDE POLLING WITHOUT RESORTING TO EMBARRAS-SINGLY TRANSPARENT MANIPULATOON. IF THE REFERENDUM GOES SMOOTHLY IN THIS REGARD, MARCOS CAN PROCEED WITH CONFIDENCE TO THE NEXT STEP OF ELECTING A NEW CONCON. IF NOT, THE CAN ALWAYS FIND A PRETEXT TO DELAY TAKING THIS STEP.
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